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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

DATE: December 13, 1957

SUBJECT: Saudi Arabian Problems

PARTICIPANTS: Mr. Saleh al-Shalfan, Minister, Saudi Arabian Embassy

David D. Newsom, NE
William D. Brewer, NE

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Mr. Shalfan called on December 9. Mr. Newsom began by giving Mr. Shalfan general information regarding Ambassador Wadsworth's recent audience with King Saud. With respect to the Dammam Port project, Mr. Newsom emphasized that the United States wished to participate along lines that are technically sound and said that Ambassador Wadsworth had been instructed to submit an aide-memoire to Finance Minister Mohammad Surur covering this project.

Mr. Shalfan then inquired regarding King Saud's letter to President Eisenhower and presented Mr. Newsom with the Arabic original and a rough English translation prepared by the Embassy (copies attached to NE file copy). Mr. Newsom confirmed that the text had already been received by the Department from Ambassador Wadsworth and stated that a reply was in process. Mr. Shalfan then referred to a report he had heard privately to the effect that France, Germany, Italy and the Benelux countries may place the question of the Middle East on the NATO Conference agenda together with a suggestion that NATO guarantee all Middle Eastern frontiers. Mr. Newsom commented that Nuri-al-Said had assumed in his conversation with the Secretary on December 6 that NATO would discuss Middle Eastern questions but that the Secretary had assured him that we would not and that we did not expect there would be any substantive decisions taken on Middle Eastern questions, in view of our general policy not to participate in decisions affecting an area without prior consultation

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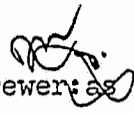
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consultation with the states concerned. Mr. Newsom indicated that this thought might well be incorporated in the President's reply to King Saud's recent letter. Mr. Shalfan then asked regarding the Italian proposal for a development fund for the Middle East. Mr. Newsom said that he was not informed but referred again to our desire to work in consultation with the states of the area.

In response to Mr. Shalfan's questions, Mr. Newsom said that Nuri al-Said had come to Washington to express on behalf of King Faisal the hope that we would take no decisions at the NATO meeting regarding the Middle East. He had received appropriate assurances on this point. Nuri had also expressed the view that United States support for a settlement of the Palestine question along the lines of the 1947 UN Resolutions would strengthen pro-Western elements in the Middle East. Mr. Newsom commented that there were a number of practical problems involved in turning back the clock in this way.

Mr. Shalfan said that Saudi Deputy Foreign Minister Yusuf Yasin was arriving in Cairo on December 9 for a meeting of the Arab League Council which would consider, among other questions, the problem of the extent of territorial waters as a preliminary to review of this matter at the International Conference on the Law of the Sea in Geneva in March 1958. Shaikh Yusuf had requested Mr. Richard Young, Saudi legal consultant, to come to Cairo for this meeting but the request had been received too late for Mr. Young to be able to accept.

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